9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

played. There are also other kinds of plays, which are called *Attakkathas* (plays in which the incidents are represented by dancing and gestures) in Travancore, and *Kathakalis* in Malabar. Many additions to these were made by different scholars in different times, and they now number about fifty-six, most of which are now being acted. Many or all of them possess a high order of literary excellence, and are, year after year, prescribed as vernacular text books for University Examinations.

Personal adornment of the actors.—In the beginning the actors had no regular dress as at present, nor was there any curtain dividing the audience from the stage. The only theatrical property known in those days were figures clumsily drawn upon the bark of the areca palm and attached to the bodies of the actors, while the orchestra consisted only of the *maddalam*, a kind of drum. But innovations were soon introduced, and the first of these were those introduced by the Tirúr or Bettattunad Raja.

It may not be out of place here to give a short sketch of a day's performance as it is to-day. A travelling company, which usually consists of twelve actors, four singers, and four musicians who form an "orchestra with drums (*maddalam* and *chenda*), gongs (*chengalam*) and cymbals (*elathalam*)", is invited and lodged in a house near which they are to give the performance. In the morning they are given gingelly oil for an oil-bath, and are then served with rice, *kanji*, and *pappadam*. This forms their breakfast. After it, they retire to sleep till about four o'clock in the afternoon. At five o'clock they are treated to a sumptuous dinner, and half an hour later begins, by beat of drums and other musical instruments of the company, a formal announcement to the villagers in the neighbourhood that a play is to be performed that night.

The stage is nothing more than a crude wooden structure slightly raised from the ground. The drop curtain consists usually of pieces of cloth sewn together and the figure of a god or an animal drawn thereon. The auditorium consists of mats strewn on the floor for the audience to sit on, while two bell-metal lamps, containing cocoanut-oil and wicks of rolled cotton cloth, are the only means of lighting the theatre. Sometimes to add to the solemnity of the occasion conch shells are

463
[357] and Kshatriya houses and temples, and deal in dairy produce, as well as being engaged in copper-sheet roofing, tile-making, pottery, palanquin-bearing, and so [178] on. But these traditional occupations are fast ceasing 872 under the ferment of a new civilisation. In the matter of education, the Nāyars occupy a prominent position. Almost every Nāyar girl is sent to the village school to learn the three R's, quite as much as a matter of [212] course as the schooling of boys. This constitutes a feature of Malabar life that makes it the most literate country in all India, especially in respect of the female 875 sex. After Rāmanujam Ezhuttachchan developed and enriched the Malayālam language, numerous Asans or village teachers came into existence in different parts of 873 Malabar. After a preliminary study of Malayālam, such as desired higher, *i.e.*, Sanskrit education, got discipled to an Ambalavāsi or a Sastri. Even to-day the estimable desire to study Sanskrit is seen in some Nāyar youths, who have readily availed themselves of the benefit of the local Sanskrit college. In respect of English education, the Nāyars occupy a prominent [658] position. The facility afforded by the Government of Travancore for the study of English is being largely availed of by Nāyars, and it is a matter deserving to be prominently recorded that, in recent years, several Nāyar girls have passed the Matriculation examination of the University of Madras."

212 It is noted, in the Gazetteer of Malabar, that "the 181 Nāyars as a class are the best educated and the most advanced of the communities in Malabar (excepting perhaps the Pattar Brāhmans, who are not strictly a Malayālam class), and are intellectually the equals of [464] the Brāhmans of the East Coast. Many of them have risen to the highest posts in Government, and the caste

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India

Kerala AWII

Sirkar Girls' Primary Vernacular School.

871

	Hindus.			Muhammadans.	Christians.	Total.
	Brahmans.	Nayars.	Other castes.			
Standard IV	1	10	2	...	...	13
„ III	10	3	2	..	5	20
„ II (*a*)	14	6	1	...	1	22
„ (*b*)	7	6	1	...	10	24
„ I (*a*)	15	10	6	...	3	34
„ (*b*)	2	19	2	...	13	36
Total ...	49	54	14	...	32	149

Nearly 75 per cent of the adults know how to read and write the vernacular, but those who know how to read and write English may be about 2 per cent. There are no pandits worth the name, nor specially educated persons, except the Nambudri Brahmans who study Sanskrit and the Vedas, but they are extremely exclusive and never mix with any people high or low. Their manners and customs would form an interesting study by themselves. [191]

The number of boys (of girls there is not one single instance) who have advanced to more advanced schools elsewhere are only a few. What with the poverty of the people and what with the rigour of the examinations only a few, perhaps fifty, in the place have been able to reach the Matriculation standard, and of these only 7 have been able to graduate, of whom two are B.L.'s. One is studying for medicine as an Hospital Assistant.

The school expenses are usually met by the students' fathers, and in the case of Nayars, uncles. But a father's purse, as I pointed out already, is not very deep. Of the seven graduates mentioned only three were able, with difficulty, to meet the high costs of modern education. The remaining four were assisted by their wives' dowries or by their fathers-in-law.

The choice of career for a candidate who has passed his Matriculation or Secondary School-leaving Certificate is very limited. Most of them engage themselves in the Government service for salaries sometimes as low as Rs. 9 per mensem, but more often Rs. 12 or Rs. 15 to start with, as clerks, teachers in the lower standards, etc. No one sees any other opening so sure and so lasting. In my judgment the modern literary education which stops with the Secondary School-leaving Certificate is not of much use. The student's energy is damped when he enters the world with his Secondary School-leaving Certificate, at least that is my experience in my village. But it is good perhaps that education is becoming less and less useful as an opening to lucrative employment; but the authorities also, in my humble opinion, should change the character of education or so modify it as to make it less literary and more technical, so that an anxious father may not look forward in vain to his son getting into some employment however mean or undignified. [873]

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Kerala AWII

873 Of the two B.L.'s I mentioned, one is the District Magistrate in the State, another is a Pleader; of the graduates one is in the Government service in British India on a pay of Rs. 35, and the rest are still continuing their further studies.

871 217 Except the Royal Readers and text-books which pupils buy for their school course there are not very many good English books in the village. A few of us have tried to start a reading-room and library for the English-reading public, but it is only a beginning. But good Malayalam books are common.

No description of village-education would be complete without noting those silent yet effective forces of culture which make a Hindu home what it is, so sweet, so hospitable, and so pious.

545 The village is often visited by a troupe of 'players' who put on the stage Puranic stories in the form of pantomimes and *natakas* or dramas. The celebrated Malabar pantomime is known as *Kathakali*. A big landlord, or ruling chief, forms a troupe of players and sends them abroad, just after the rainy season is over. This troupe comes to a village, and a well-to-do and influential man in the village is expected to make arrangements for a performance. The expenses of the troupe for that day together with a small donation, which seldom exceeds Rs. 10, are to be paid by that person, and the villagers can witness the performance free of charge. The reputation of the man who has started the troupe, generally a big zamindar or a ruling chief, goes a long way in canvassing persons willing to meet the expenses of the play in a village. Sometimes the pantomime takes place in the local temple and the *devaswom* authorities are bound to meet the daily expenses of the players. This troupe travels from place to place and returns at the end of the season to the place from which it started and the members engage themselves in their respective occupations, generally agriculture, or as servants to the landlord who formed the troupe. The same round is repeated in the next season.

538 There are also various ways of teaching broadcast the Puranic lore such as *chakiyar kooth*, *ottam thullal*, etc.

In a *chakiyar kooth*, the *chakiyar* recites certain Sanskrit *slokas* illustrative of stories from the Puranas and interprets them with wit and humour in such an excellent fashion that there will not be one in the audience who does not stretch his sides with laughter. In an *ottam thullal*, the person recites with appropriate gestures verses composed in short Malayalam metre dealing with Puranic stories. These are usually performed on the occasion of festivals in temples.

The above institutions are indigenous to Malabar. Among the Tamil Brahmans, a travelling *Sastrigal* often visits a village and reads Puranic stories in Sanskrit in the local temple and interprets them in Tamil so that the men and women in the village may understand them. At the time of his departure a decent sum is subscribed and paid to him.

In every decent home, a member of the family reads stories from the Puranas to the other inmates in the vernacular. All the people listen with rapt attention and sometimes engage in a lively discussion. Tamil Brahman ladies usually learn by heart Puranic stories in the shape of songs which they recite every